FORUM

University of Edinburgh
Postgraduate Journal of Culture and the Arts
Issue 22 | Spring 2016

Title	"You're either with us, or you are with the terrorists" – Juxtaposed Ideologies in the War on Terror
Author	Maryam Jameela
Publication	FORUM: University of Edinburgh Postgraduate Journal of Culture & the Arts
Issue Number	22
Issue Date	Spring 2016
Publication Date	30/05/2016
Editors	Emma Sullivan and Matthew Tibble

"You're either with us, or you are with the terrorists" - Juxtaposed Ideologies in the War on Terror

Maryam Jameela
University of Sheffield

A recent British government policy document has attempted to tackle the various guises of extremism by outlining definitions and proposed solutions for a structural approach to the threat of terror. In doing so, the command paper characterises the relationship between Britain and Islamic terrorists as one of an ideological conflict playing out between Western powers and Muslim fundamentalists. In exaggerating the apparent polarisation necessary for an ideological conflict, I will demonstrate how the text locks us into certain narratives that filter out historical contexts in favour of a binary rhetoric aimed at furthering conflicts based on ideology as natural conclusions, rather than the constructions and manipulations of policy.

9/11 has come to signify the starting point in a fifteen year conflict, with the so-called "war on terror" carrying extensive consequences for much of the world. It is difficult to communicate the weight and cultural nuance of the various wars, invasions, and attacks and their political and legal ramifications, that characterise this period of suspicion and paranoia against Muslim communities. Much of the political discourse emerging from Western nations has depicted this "war on terror" as a clash of civilisations, as in Samuel Huntington's influential work of the same name that posits a divide between Eastern principles and Western values (1996). Edward Said's earlier canonical work *Orientalism* (1978) interrogates this rhetoric and presents a powerful critique of a binary opposition that extends into contemporary times, particularly with respect to Muslims of colour as the locus of an ongoing ideological conflict.

One such manifestation of this conflict is British Prime Minister David Cameron's spearheading of a counter-extremism strategy in response to his belief in the growing threat of Islamic extremism and his concern at British citizens potentially fighting for Islamic terrorists. *Command Paper 9148* outlines the most recent iteration from the British government of their intention to tackle all forms of extremism and the threat they pose to "British values" (5). My close reading of this particular policy document will illuminate the nuances of ideological terror-based conflict and will question the impact that this ideology of juxtaposed identities has had upon the government's conception of British values and how this apparently all-encompassing value system clashes with religious freedoms, with particular emphasis upon Muslim communities within the United Kingdom.

Policy analysis as narrative deconstruction

Policy documents operate within a three part structure: firstly, they identify a national issue to be addressed; secondly, they consider actions to be taken for the public good; and finally, they outline actions to be taken by the government, and detail how these actions will be implemented. Such a

structure is more of a tradition in politics and sociology than in literature or, at the very least, a more explicit structure which remains only implicit in fiction and literary criticism.

A recent debate between policy analysis researchers has seen a move from empirical approaches to constructivism and critical realism. Mark Bevir isolates a moment from his work with R. A. W Rhodes that is particularly useful for practising traditional fiction analysis with a nonfiction methodology. Bevir and Rhodes move away from a tradition of empiricism and outline a framework they name "meaning holism" (Bevir 184) as an alternative approach more attuned to social realities and the formulation of meaning. Bevir states that "no proposition ever confronts the world in splendid isolation. Evidence only ever confronts overarching webs of belief, and even then the evidence is saturated by theories that are part of the relevant webs of belief" (188). For Bevir, the notion of states behaving as social agents cognizant of belief systems and cultural narratives is a concept central to good policy analysis. However, the centrality of context still does not account for the process and relative veracity of how any particular context is deemed to be relevant for analysis. For example, this paper will read post-9/11 culture through the lens of a postcolonial feminism cognizant of Western colonialism and imperialism, a context relevant to anti-extremism legislation due to the historical status of Britain as an imperial and colonial power. This context is a pertinent "web of belief" that will yield an analysis critical of Western epistemologies, a context that provides a historical background often missing from contemporary analyses of Western influence on non-Western regions. As valuable as this context is for my analysis, it still constitutes a construction which in itself demonstrates how necessary it is to interrogate how knowledge is produced and to acknowledge the artificiality of deeming certain contexts to be more relevant than others.

Stuart McAnulla extends these concerns by taking issue with the role agency plays in Bevir and Rhodes' conception of the self-reflexive praxis of policy makers themselves. McAnulla questions the apparent straightforwardness of their articulation of contextualised meaning, instead arguing that there is a distinction between how webs of belief are "in reality" and how individuals come to perceive those webs. For McAnulla, it is important to assert that whilst the agency of individuals (both in policy making and its reception) is fluid and subject to change based on context and history, it is limited by tradition and by the social responsibilities placed upon individuals (116). McAnulla suggests that these constraints can be mitigated through the inclusion of social structures in the model in order to acknowledge that both entities are changed by the "impact of the external world on actors", itself a recognition of the fluctuating nature of personal belief systems (123). That context cannot be assumed to form the entirety of a "relevant web of belief" but, rather, questions the reception and dissemination of policy documents. In other words, as much as the contexts and influences behind political thought need to be foregrounded, McAnulla demonstrates that a flexible position alive to the developing contexts and impact upon social change on the part of both policy makers and policy readers is also vital.

However, in positing a separation between beliefs in reality and how individuals interpret that reality, McAnulla betrays a troubling conceptualisation at the heart of policy analysis. As Patricia Hill Collins states, "no one group has a clear angle of vision. No one group possesses the theory or methodology that allows it to discover the absolute 'truth'" (234). In developing the relevant methodology or theory for policy analysis the issue is not sifting truthful reality from perceptions of

reality. Rather, it is a matter of acknowledging and ascertaining perceptions of culture, society and history and, as Bevir and Rhodes advocate, perceiving a sense of storytelling within policy analysis so as to better formulate a picture of the context of policy analysis, and how it is understood within different time periods and contexts.

This revised model impacts government policy analysis in that it acknowledges the importance of specificity and nuance in understanding the centrality of storytelling or narrative to policy analysis. As *Command Paper 9148* concerns preventative counter-terrorism measures that involve Muslim extremists, the context and history that I will have to be mindful of is one that many countries are currently experiencing. We might list the following as elements of the dominant contextual narrative in which this paper emerges: 9/11; 7/7; the attacks in Madrid and Paris; the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq; US torture and illegal detainment in Abu Ghraib; and drone operations in Pakistan and Afghanistan. This list is neither comprehensive nor nuanced and paints a very crude picture. It also calls to mind oppositions of good and evil, and cause and effect; and, given that this ideological conflict is still on-going, it is perhaps inevitable that issues of accountability are heatedly debated. However, these binary oppositions are themselves constructed, and are arguably reductive attempts at over-arching narratives. It is, nevertheless, a context that will define how I read this policy document and will affect the constructions of both my aims and conclusions.

Juxtaposed Ideologies

The *Counter Extremism Strategy* (2015) policy document defines extremism from a governmental perspective and outlines relevant problems and solutions. David Cameron and Home Secretary, Theresa May introduce the document by mentioning the centrality of "British values", which Cameron defines as "the liberty we cherish, the rights we enjoy and the democratic institutions that help protect them" (CM 9148, 5). May includes "democracy, free speech, mutual respect, and opportunity for all" in these values (CM 9148, 7). The phrase "British values" is used repeatedly throughout and frequently to justify the necessity of action in defence of these values. Cameron and May establish a binary opposition with "extremism" as "the vocal or active opposition to our fundamental values" (CM 9148, 9). The pronoun "our" cements the binary and defines the conflict as one that is 'us' against 'them'. This notion is further underscored by the infrequent, yet powerful, assertion that British society is "successful" (CM 9148, 5) because it is a "diverse, multi-racial, multi-faith society" (CM 9148, 9). In positioning Britain as a successful pluralistic society invested in racial and religious diversity, the document constructs British society as a utopia open to all, a utopia forced to defend itself from the scourge of extremism. Given that all of the above quotations come from "Chapter 1 - The Threat from Extremism" (CM 9148, 9) the implication is that those individuals characterised as "extremists" would therefore be anti-diversity, anti-free-speech and anti-democracy.

The document does clarify that "our values are not exclusive to Britain…they have been shaped by our history…in which we have seen injustice, misery and damage caused by discrimination on the basis of religion, race, gender, disability or sexual orientation" (CM 9148). The use of the passive "we have seen" communicates the sense that any past injustices, whilst they shaped British values, were not perpetrated by Britain. In a parallel with the government's version of contemporary reality, this

particular narrative strand cements Britain's position as passive victim of various injustices (and implicitly a perpetrator of none) and the upholder of values.

The construction of British values holding fast against extremism can be further elucidated by another favoured pattern in the text — the description of certain Muslim teachings as "ideology" (CM 9148, 10). When discussing "the harm extremism causes", the text states that "across the country there is evidence of extremists, driven by ideology, promoting or justifying actions which run directly contrary to our shared values" (CM 9148, 10). In this case "ideology" is a rather vague choice of words, implying a cohesive, overarching system whereby extremists are able to function and navigate against the equally vague, yet implausibly cohesive, British values. The phrase is used again with the assertion that "there is a clear distinction between Islam — a religion followed peacefully by millions — and the ideology promoted by Islamist extremists" (CM 9148, 21). This rhetoric creates an opposition, between "values" and "ideology". "Values" is communicated around phrases like "shared" and "community", implying togetherness and benefits for all, while "ideology" is altogether more sinister, implying dogmatism and a concerted effort to defeat these less threatening "values", the latter a more benign word that is left to imply an "extremist" Muslim. This implication is further heightened by a distinction between "religion" as acceptable and "ideology" as a mutation of the former, which paints a narrative of harmless Muslim subjects and harmful Muslim subjects. The harmful Muslim has, then, been established in opposition to foundational British values and is thus marginalised within the text to occupy a linguistically and analytically menacing position.

The policy document presents the need for action as one rooted in defending fundamental values threatened by concerted effort from outside Others to destabilise the nation. Given this stark binary opposition it is little wonder that arguments like Huntington's *Clash of Civilisations* (1996) are so widespread and popular. When presented as the only option of analysis the conflict of terrorism comes to be viewed as a wildly oversimplified clash of juxtaposed ideologies, where, at least in this policy document, the narrative constitutes an accurate description of reality. The history and context of Britain as a possible perpetrator of state-sanctioned terrorism (for example, its involvement in illegal detainment and torture practices[1]), or even the history of Britain as a colonial and imperial nation that brought harm to millions, is not a narrative strand conducive to the picture being painted by the policy document of Britain under attack. Evidently, the narrative framing within the policy document of British values being defended against extremist ideologies exacerbates an already symbolically and physically violent conflict.

Modes of Extremism

The accusation of extremism is not, however, only levelled at Muslims. Cameron claims that the "scourge of extremism" is constituted by "sickening displays of neo-Nazism, Islamophobia, antisemitism and, of course, Islamist extremism" (CM 9148, 5). This tendency to group disparate forms of extremism together, is further demonstrated with the following assertion: "Islamist extremism is not the only threat, as seen by the vicious actions of a number of extreme right-wing and neo-Nazi groups"

[1] The Iraq Historic Allegations Team, which tackles allegations of unlawful killing and torture during the Iraq war has been "overwhelmed with cases," reports Jonathan Owen in *The Independent* (1 Feb. 2016).

(CM 9148, 10). This is followed by various examples of racist, Islamophobic, Islamic extremist or anti-Semitic hate crimes all described as acts of "intolerance" and "extremism" (CM 9148, 11). The decision to group separate facets of extremism together is a peculiar one given that much of the document is at pains to chart the growth of Islamic "ideology" at length. It is an epistemologically questionable decision to place Islamic extremism and racist, Islamophobic hate crimes on the same plane, to say nothing of the decision to include neo-Nazism and antisemitism in an already confused grouping. There is no explanation of any possible links between the presentation of Islamic extremism in the media and the rise of Islamophobic hate crimes, nor any justification of grouping disparate forms of hate crime together, other than for convenience or for its own ideological purposes.

Whilst there is an explanation of the development of extreme right-wing groups in the UK (CM 9148, 23) with a discussion of contesting online spaces where said groups mobilise, chapters four, five and six are all concerned with laying out methods for counter-terrorism. The context and history behind terms such as "extremism," "terrorism" and "radicalisation" have been developed into connoting overwhelmingly Muslim subjects[2] indeed, I would argue that in contemporary times the terms "terrorist" and "extremist" have become synonymous with "Muslim." Absent articulations are thus particularly telling for the narrative construction at work here. In a linguistic sense, at least, Muslims are both the text and implicit text of the policy document — however committed the government is to combating hate crimes. Whilst it is arguable that this concerted attention to other groups is a misguided attempt to avoid accusations of singling out Muslims, it remains the case that the policy document focuses overwhelmingly on Muslims.

As a policy document, it is certainly arguable that the text is not positioned to offer up any such explanation, but as Bevir and Rhodes would argue, such an imposition could only serve to allow policy analysts to reflect on the particular choices of policy makers. In this instance, the grouping of different modes of extremism conveys a lack of rigour in tackling antisemitism and Islamophobia, especially given that so little space is given to identifying causes, symptoms and possible solutions. The priority is evidently Islamic extremism, with a sizeable but still much smaller amount of attention paid to right-wing groups. This places the issues to be tackled within British society in an unfortunate hierarchy, to say nothing of the counter-narrative it presents to the notion of a "successful" Britain (CM 9148, p. 5). Whilst acknowledging that there are more forms of extremism than Islamic terrorism, the document is unsuccessful in constructing nuanced accounts of these other forms, thus undermining their legitimacy as conflicts which require attention.

National identity/religious identity

The question of religious identity clashing with national identity is addressed in Cameron's foreword when he states that "people should have no difficulty in identifying themselves as a proud Sikh, or Jew, or Muslim, Hindu or Christian as well as being a proud Brit", (CM 9148, 5) whilst going on to state his aim of stopping "them [extremists] from driving a wedge between British Muslims and the rest of our society" (CM 9148, 6). As discussed earlier, this contradicts the conceit of including other

[2] A recent article by Omar Alnatour in *The Huffington Post* presents a convincing case by analysing the statistics behind terrorism in the US and Europe, particularly with regards to the link between the ethnicity of the criminal and the style of media coverage (12 Sep. 2015).

forms of extremism alongside Islamic terrorism and also demarcates "British Muslims" as a group separate from 'regular' British people. Granted, Cameron's words imply unity but the subtle separation of "Muslim" and "British Muslim" is one which marks the latter group out as separate and Other.

The government's intention for the paper is to:

> "promote a positive alternative showing that it is entirely possible to reconcile your faith identity and national identity, something that the overwhelming majority of people of all faiths do every day." (CM 9148, 24)

In doing so, it extends the clash between national identity and religious identity as one fundamental to solving the ideological conflict and further integrating British Muslims into British society — itself a claim that rests on the assumption that British Muslims are somehow not fully integrated.

This is not to say that this particular conflict is one which British Muslims do actually confront on a regular basis, but rather that it has been assumed that being Muslim must clash with any sense of Britishness. It is reasonable to assume that many British Muslims do not experience this clash in any way and, whilst there is a need to discuss this at length elsewhere, in this particular policy document the language used to address conflicts of nationality and religion subtly highlights a separation of British and Muslim, as with the demarcation between 'good Muslims' and 'bad Muslims.' Muslims are debated and dissected in the public arena in terms of possible allegiances and internal conflicts, all the while characterised as subtly distinct from other British people. This particular example of the perception of British Muslims is an example of a more symbolic conflict that frames Muslims as carrying internal conflicts and in opposition to a "normal" British community.

Construction of terrorism

The construction of this Muslim subject is further exemplified by the repeated opposition of a marginalised voice gaining a mainstream reception. The text states that "a small number of strident extremists drown out the mainstream majority, both in person and online" and concludes "we're now going to actively encourage the reforming and moderate Muslim voices" (CM 9148, 31). Once again, such rhetoric embeds the dichotomy of a helpless Muslim, who is therefore open to cooperation, versus a harmful Muslim, who is thus closed to the values of Britain and actively looking to attack those values. The relationship between isolated and marginalised voices gaining traction appears to involve a degree of cognitive dissonance, but the implication is clearly that the internet acts as a great leveller, a platform bringing social reach to a small group.

This opposition serves to support the government's proposed solution of recruiting the voices of "individuals and groups who have credibility and experience fighting extremism within their communities" (CM 9148, 31). This leaves no room for "moderate" Muslims who are not extremists but are still critical of government policy towards Muslims. The proposed solutions of the text are based on the principle that "government cannot do this alone" (CM 9148, 16) and encourages individuals to confront extremists online, in addition to calling for internet companies to restrict and censor platforms for extremism. As demonstrated earlier, the definitions of extremism and terrorism are under the purview of the government, along with the "credibility" (CM 9148, 31) of individuals who may confront online extremism. The dichotomy constructed around the role of British Muslims, then, is one which is centred not so much on the fact that "government cannot do this alone," but rather on the notorious

proviso that "you're either with us, or you are with the terrorists" (Bush 30/57). This positioning constitutes a stifling dichotomy that capitalises on a narrative of juxtaposition which in turn isolates "moderate'" Muslims further away from that which the government deems acceptable.

The narrative of Islamic extremists as a small minority is one that presumes all Muslims have the potential for extremism, especially given the reference to 'Prevent', an initiative encouraging schoolteachers to identify early signs of radicalisation in children (CM 9148, 26). Explicitly, the text claims that moderate Muslims are acceptable Muslims that can integrate seamlessly into British culture, but implicitly the text communicates a profound mistrust of Islam. For example, the text constructs an image of terrorist figures able to weaken the "social fabric of our country" because they hail from places where "women's rights are fundamentally eroded" and where "there is discrimination on the basis of gender, race, religious belief or sexual orientation" (CM 9148, 10). Not only does this erase the existence of native British Muslims, this rhetoric also functions as justification for state-sanctioned violence, especially given that the document recommends a number of strategies which inform the UK government's decision to bomb Syria.[3] The construction of terrorists, and implicitly Muslim terrorists, follows a pattern both familiar from both other government policies and the British media which portray Muslims as inherently malevolent and worthy of suspicion. The link between the representation of Muslims and state-sanctioned violence against Muslims needs only the context of the past 15 or so years of conflict in order to be characterised as a structural system of oppression built on the actions of a minority.

Women's rights

The reductive and decontextualized approach to defining both Islam and Islamic extremism is best typified with regards to the Muslim British women[4] mentioned in the text. The only instance of singling out a specific sub-group arises when Muslim women are mentioned. When discussing the impact of ignoring both Islamic extremism and other forms of hate crime, Theresa May writes that the end result would be the erosion of "women's rights" (CM 9148, 7). By drawing this conclusion, May establishes a tentative link between unopposed Islamic extremism and the loss of rights for women. This is repeated later with the same phrasing. Such a suggestion contributes to a pernicious and widespread narrative of backwards, brown men subjugating brown women. As Gayatri Spivak outlines in her 1983 essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" this stereotype enables a situation where "white men are saving brown women from brown men" (93). Brown men are further demonised in order to elevate the status of white saviours, thereby leaving brown women stranded in the middle as objects of oppression.

The text communicates this context through the manner in which it introduces Muslim women. For example, a chapter headed "The Extremist Threat" posits that extremists "reject the very principle upon which democracy is based" (CM 9148, 7). This claim precedes a section under the heading of

[3] The BBC News website provides a useful breakdown of the lead-up to the UK government's decision to engage in air strikes against Islamic State in Syria: "Syria air strikes: – What you need to know."

[4] I have presumed the terrorist subjects cited thus far are gendered as male because an overwhelming majority of Islamic extremists are shown in the news media to be male. The media declares female Muslim terrorists to be particularly noteworthy. For example, *The New York Times* published an article by Jane Huckerby with the headline "When Women Become Terrorists," discussing the strategic choice of extremists to deploy female terrorists in a male-dominated sphere.

"harmful and illegal cultural practices" (CM 9148, 13) where female genital mutilation, forced marriage and honour-based violence are discussed. Public discourse on these three issues has historically aligned them as issues rife in Muslim communities and it is no coincidence that the section ends with the line, "we must tackle the root causes that mean *certain communities* continue to propagate such harmful practices" (CM 9148, 13, my italics). Rather than explicitly addressing the harmful stereotype of these conditions as exclusive or widespread within Muslim communities, the text chooses to implicitly align the two, rather than exploring the existence of these highly complex and constantly evolving issues in the social context within which they originate. Once again, the text constructs a narrative of oppositions that posits the superiority of Western culture against a subordinate and backwards Other, the Muslim subject.

Whilst concluding with a desire for a cohesive community, the text claims that isolation is a major root cause of radicalisation and that such isolation breeds "values" which can take hold and promote

> "behaviour which is deeply discriminatory to women and girls, such as limiting equal access to education, justice, and employment, thereby creating an environment where a range of illegal cultural practices including so-called Honour-Based Violence, FGM [female genital mutilation] and Forced Marriage are perpetuated." (CM 9148, 37)

The attitude conveyed within the text, then, is one which positions the historical and social background of Muslim culture as one which is inherently opposed to rights for women, and, if allowed to spiral from a belief into an ideology, will bring its misogyny to Western cultures.

Jasbir Puar's model of US exceptionalism builds on Spivak's articulation of the position of brown women in relation to larger systems of political policy and rhetoric. Puar describes "US sexual exceptionalism" (2) as a strategy that consolidates the nation's self-ordained position as a liberated and liberating global power. Puar uses the optics of queer theory to elaborate upon America's use of the appearance of liberalism to advance the rhetoric of a civilised and liberated West against a sexually-repressed and oppressive Muslim world in the East (39). Puar's model was applied to sexual torture at Abu Ghraib and media coverage of the events, and it also provides an interesting context to this policy document's framing of British values under attack from a Muslim threat. This particular document, and indeed British foreign policy more generally, has demonstrated a proclivity for constructing an opposition of explicitly progressive, even utopic, British values against an implicitly regressive and overtly oppressive culture of Islam in the East. As Puar argued in her work, Western formations of identity and self-knowledge are predicated on the construction, and often the denigration, of the Other (41). It is politically, socially and culturally easier to engender a narrative based on conflicting ideology, rather than confronting alternative, more nuanced, historical narratives.

It is not a notable innovation that Muslim women are paid particular attention. Indeed, women are frequently positioned as a litmus test for a successful society and have come to symbolise a conflict that often uses the image of Muslim women in various veils as synonymous with oppression. Ultimately, the policy document reveals an uninterrogated conviction of British superiority which revels in the superiority of Britain as a haven of equal rights for women in direct opposition to the apparent barbarism of Islamic culture, or, as the text would name it, Islamic ideology. The text utilises a foundation of historical oppositions based on 'clashes of culture' in order to engineer a further

ideological conflict where mounting a defence (and, indeed, definition) of "our" values is only conceivable within the arena of ideological conflict. Women, then, become puppets of discourse that are used to signify the space between warring ideologies, both as individuals and as a group.

Conclusion

Command Paper 9148 carefully constructs a narrative of opposition between Britain as a victim of terrorism defending values such as freedom, democracy and mutual respect, against the cohesive, organised and brute force of Islamic extremism. The question of British people who are also Muslims has become, for British citizens, a symbol of this apparent culture clash; the policy document is at pains to assert the acceptability of 'harmless' Muslims who adhere to British values without questioning possible Islamophobia from the government. Muslim women feature prominently throughout, and whilst the government may emphasise the importance of tackling discrimination against Muslim women from Muslim 'cultures,' it nevertheless remains the case that this strategy exists to draw attention away from a culture of sexism in Britain and towards the supposed sexism and misogyny within Muslim patriarchal culture. These tactics serve to present a clash of civilisations, and exaggerate the polarisation necessary for an ideological conflict, while disavowing the ideological nature of British culture in order to maintain a presentation of Britain as a dehistoricised victim of terror.

David Cameron recently exposed his belief that Muslim women are "traditionally submissive", (Harker) and drew a link between British Muslim women being unable to speak English, and their inability to deter husbands and sons from terrorism (Press Association). Cameron's comments typify the worst stereotypes about Muslim women, of an innately submissive group of people who do not integrate and do not engage with local communities or British values. These stereotypes serve to dehumanise and belittle British Muslim women whilst using them as props for a wider debate on terrorism - irrespective of accuracy, empathy or good cognitive practices. I have demonstrated how such techniques lock us into certain narratives that filter out historical contexts in favour of a polarising and reductive rhetoric.

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Author Biography

Maryam Jameela is a WRoCAH-funded PhD Researcher in the School of English at the University of Sheffield. Her work examines intersectional representations of Desi women in cultural products produced post-9/11 through testing avenues of approach in a highly contemporary and saturated field. She is particularly interested in a process of decentring western feminism and epistemology through a culturally aware phenomenological approach.